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### ***After 30-year Hiatus, Chinook Season Possible on Upper Salmon River***

For the first time in nearly 30 years, anglers in Idaho may get the chance to fish for Chinook salmon on the Upper Salmon River.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) and Idaho Department of Fish and Game have reached an agreement to allow anglers to harvest surplus hatchery summer and spring Chinook returning to the Pahsimeroi and Sawtooth hatcheries.

The plan will be implemented only if there are adequate numbers of returning hatchery and naturally produced Chinook, NOAA Fisheries said. State and federal collaboration is necessary because the returning naturally spawning Chinook, which can mix with hatchery-origin stocks, are listed as threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act.

"We're delighted that fishing can be restored in these areas, and without compromising salmon recovery," said Rob Jones, head of the NOAA Fisheries hatcheries and inland fisheries division in Portland.

Under the new plan, only hatchery fish not needed for propagation will be available for harvest. These fish are permanently marked as hatchery origin by having their small adipose fin removed before they are released into the wild.

Both hatcheries are operated by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game and were developed to provide fishing opportunities

"We believe we'll have enough fish returning this year for anglers to harvest them without jeopardizing ESA-listed stocks" said Sharon Kiefer, IDFG anadromous fisheries manager.

If anglers catch Chinook salmon that are not adipose-fin-clipped, indicating they are wild and thus protected under the ESA, they must release them. The state will monitor the harvest.

There are six populations of Chinook salmon in the upper Salmon River. Fishing regulations, this year and in the future, will depend on the health of those populations, according to NOAA Fisheries. Biologists will have to wait until May or early June to make a final determination about whether enough fish are in the river to allow a harvest.

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